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ABSTRACT

The construct of competence in interpersonal communication is conceptually refined in this paper, which first provides an extensive review and evaluation of the conceptual and empirical literature concerning competence and discusses a new taxonomy of competence constructs. The paper then offers a three-component model of relational competence that includes motivation, knowledge, and skill in communicative contexts. The paper concludes by identifying numerous operational criteria that represent functional outcomes of competent interaction. A 23-page bibliography and a taxonomic classification of conceptualizations/operationalizations found in the literature are included. (HOD)

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COMPETENCE IN COMMUNICATING:

A TAXONOMY, REVIEW, CRITIQUE, AND PREDICTIVE MODEL

ABSTRACT

An extensive review and evaluation of the conceptual and empirical literature concerning competence is performed. To facilitate analysis, a new taxonomy of competence constructs is devised. Despite an enormous amount of conceptual and empirical effort, few operationally predictive models have been developed. A three component model of relational competence is therefore constructed. The components are motivation, knowledge, and skill in communicative contexts. In addition, numerous operational criteria are identified that represent functional outcomes of competent interaction.

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I. COMPETENCE: INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

The notion of competence in social interaction is as equivocal as it is ubiquitous. Virtually every theory of adaptive and maladaptive human behavior attempts to account for the varying levels of human competence in interacting with self, others, and objects in the environment. Yet, the factors comprising competence, the modes of interaction it entails, and the effects of the environment are viewed in widely divergent ways. The conceptual fragmentation is evident in the field of communication as well. Competence in communicating has been conceptualized and operationalized in a multitude of ways (see Kelly, Chase & Wiemann, 1979 and Wiemann & Backlund, 1080 for reviews). Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain what the specific cognitive and behavioral components of competence should be.

Identifying the important components of competence is clearly a critical task of theory and research in competent interaction. Research has repeatedly found that interpersonal communication competence is vital to psychological health (Trower, 1980; Trower Bryant & Argyle, 1978; Zigler & Phillips, 1961), educational and occupational success (Argyle, 1969; Becker, 1977; Breen Donlon & Whitaker, 1978; Krembs, 1980; Moment & Zaleznik, 1963; Trenholm & Rose, 1981), intercultural adaptation (Buckingham & Rosenfeld 1978; Ruben, 1976; Sedano & Ribeau, 1981), and social success (Arkowitz, 1977; Fitts, 1970). Stated succinctly, "communicative competence is essential for social, personal, and educational growth" (Simon, 1979, p. vii). It is equally clear that a major hinderance to the development of effective teaching and training methods for communicative competence is the lack of precise conceptualization & measurement.

Explanation, prediction, and control all rely upon the precision with which a construct has been conceptualized and operationalized. It is the intent of this essay to conceptually refine the construct of competence in interpersonal communication. To accomplish this broad goal, the following tasks will be undertaken: (1) critical examination of the social-psychological and communication literatures regarding competence, and (2) construction of an integrative model of competence in communicating and identification of its operational components.

A Taxonomy of Competence Constructs

An examination of the literature reveals contradicting terminologies and imprecise conceptualizations. An extensive list of constructs has resulted from this state of confusion, including fundamental competence, sense of competence and self-esteem, problem-solving competence, rhetorical competence and sensitivity, linguistic competence, communicative competence, social skills and competence, and finally, interpersonal competence and interpersonal communication competence. Due to the inconsistencies of the various disciplinary argots, the conceptual taxonomy in Table 1 will be elaborated.

The utility of the category scheme is elaborated throughout this review and can be judged initially by its comprehensiveness of categorization as shown in Appendix A. Constructs are classified by

Table 1. Taxonomy of Competence Conceptualizations

LOCI / FOCI	PERSON	PERSON X SITUATION	(PERSON X PERSON) X SITUATION
OUTCOMES	Fundamental Competence and Efficacy	Social Skills and Competence	Interpersonal and Strategic Competence
COMMUNICATION	Linguistic Competence	Communicative Competence	Relational Competence

their respective loci of explanation and empirical foci. The loci refer to the "locations" of the explanatory construct. For example, communicative competence constructs explain competence through individual knowledge of social rules in a given context; hence, a person by situation locus of explanation. The foci represent the empirical emphasis of the constructs. For example, strategic competence focus on interpersonal goal attainment as an outcome or indicator of competent interaction. This perspective is represented as an outcome oriented approach to competence.

All of the views of competence entail notions of appropriate and /or effective ineraction with social/environmental contingencies. But aspects of essential aspects of appropriateness and effectiveness, little consensus can be found. For purposes of clarification, this review of the literature relies on conceptual characteristics that are more discriminating than appropriateness and effectiveness. The breakdown by persons, situations, outcomes, and communicative processes provides numerous heuristic distinctions.

Fundamental Competence and Efficacy

Several theorists have described competence in extremely broad and encompassing forms. These conceptualizations refer to the ways in which humans adapt to the world around them (Connolly & Bruner, 1974; Coulter & Morrow, 1978; Smith & Greenberg, 1979). This expansive construct is referred to as fundamental competence. Humans tend to develop some fundamental level of competence in adapting to the changing environmental contingencies that confront them. This construct is concerned with personal abilities and adaptive outcomes resulting from these abilities. Analysis of this construct centers around the developmental aspects of competence, the abilities involved, and specifically, the idea of adaptability.

Three compatible theories have been advanced to explain the development or growth of competence from infancy through adulthood: effectance motivation, sense of efficacy, and attribution theory. R.H. White (1960) engendered the theory of effectance motivation to describe "what the neuromuscular system wants to do when it is otherwise unoccupied or is gently stimulated by the environment" (p. 321). That is, our effectance urge motivates us to interact with the environment, to cause change, to be causal agents. An infant experiences pleasure upon shaking a rattle and recognizing that s/he is the cause of the sound produced.

As the social realm of family and peers begins to permeate the infant's world, the processes of play, fantasy, role identification, and language become salient. As children enter into social interaction, they also begin to develop a sense of self and identity (Mead 1934/1974). The self develops only in relationship to others, because only in others is there a basis for self-comparison. So the effectance urge, largely biological in theory, is transformed into a sociological construct of self-esteem. White (1966, 1968, 1976), Harter (1978), Broucek (1979), and Franks and Morolla (1976), believe that the anatomical urges of effectance are redefined by social perception processes. The effectance motive becomes a desire for a sense of competence, that is, a sense of self-esteem. Effective social interactions become subjective measures of self-worth by gratifying the actor and resulting in satisfaction and

pleasure. The degree to which this reinforcement is positive depends upon the specific developmental history of the person. Smith (1968) describes these developmental aspects of competence as follows:

> Launched on the right trajectory, the person is likely to accumulate successes that strengthen the effectiveness of his orientation toward the world while at the same time he acquires the knowledge and skills that make his further success more probable. His environmental involvements generally lead to gratification and to increased competence and favorable development. Off to a bad start, on the other hand, he soon encounters failures that make him hesitant to try . . . And he falls increasingly behind his fellows in acquiring the knowledge and skills that are needed for success on those occasions when he does try (p. 277).

Two implications derive from Smith's analysis. First, the idea that successive failures or successes head to unfavorable or levels of competence can be viewed compatibly with attributional theories of development. Attribution theories concern the ways in which persons perceive causality and the origins of events (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Siebold & Spitzberg, 1981; Weiner, 1980). Individuals who consistently attribute effective self-causation of positive outcomes to their own action and ability are likely to perceive themselves as competent. Likewise, self-perceived competence can be expected to increase as causality for negative outcomes is attributed to external origins such as luck, external stimuli, or other's actions. Attributions of cause may mediate our perceived ability, and thus, our effort & motivation (Brown & Inouve, 1978; Burke, 1978). An attribution interpretation of efficacy theories ultimately has significant implications for a communication theory of competence. For example, to what extent are favorable and unfavorable messages from others attributed as responses to one's own communicative messages and ability, or instead, to external causes (Kaplan, 1976). To the extent that interactions with others are evaluated in terms of causality, the degree to which an individual attributes desirable message outcomes to external causation will be an important indicator of self-perceived competence.

The second implication of Smith's (1969) analysis is that knowledge and skills are critical to competent interaction. Competence is conceptualized frequently in terms of skills. A skill refers "to the organization of actions into a purposeful plan which is executed with economy: . . . the essence of the skill lies in the ability to achieve a goal" (Elliot & Connolly, 1974, p. 135). As learned and consciously focused potentials, skills are types of abilities. So, to some extent, a theory of skills is a theory of abilities. As Foote and Cottrell (1955) write, "Competence is a synonym for ability" (p. 36). And a "theory of ability is a theory of adaptive behavior," requiring "us to explain how a person produces a consistent result despite variations in the situation" (Baldwin, 1958, p. 200). Competence, therefore, im-

plies consistent performance in the face of environmental change, which in turn, suggests the concept of adaptability.

No other aspect of competence and effective social functioning seems so universally adhered to as the ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions (Bladwin, 1958; Brunner & Phelps, 1980; Flavell, Botkin, Fry, Jarvis & Wright, 1968; Foote & Cottrell, 1955; Hale & Delia, 1976; Hart & Burks, 1972; Ivey & Hurst, 1971; Moment & Zaleznik, 1963; Ritter, 1979). The conceptual progenitor of adaptability may well be the construct of rigidity, which is the anthithesis of behavioral flexibility, and is applied to concerns of abnormal psychology (Braen, 1960; Dreskin, 1968; Cervin, 1957; Colten & Langolois, 1976; Muhar, 1974; Schaie, 1955; Scott, 1966; Wolpert, 1955; Zelen & Levitt, 1954). Adaptability, behavioral flexibility, behavioral repertoires, creativity, and interactional flexibility are all terms used to represent a relatively stable ability to produce consistent responses in others by adjusting to varied situations are more important to the individual than others. With these considerations in mind, Sunberg Snowden and Reynolds (1978) offer a representative definition of competence as the "personal characteristics (knowledge, skills and attitudes) which lead to achievements having adaptive payoffs in significant environments" (pp. 195-196). This definition also demonstrates why fundamental competence is a person/outcome construct. Even though sense of efficacy and adaptability imply interaction with others and the environment, the construct of competence itself is located within the person. That is, the outcome of effective interactions is a sense of efficacy. And increasing efficacy is reflected by stronger self-esteem and/or enhanced skills. Self-esteem and skill (e.g., adaptability) are inherently person-centered constructs.

The strength of the fundamental competence construct is that it provides a motivational framework for interpreting actions and deriving explanations. For example, Rochner and Kelly (1974) and Parks (1977) have incorporated efficacy and control factors into models of competence. Whereas the notion of fundamental competence is motivationally strong, it is communicationally weak. That is, it is difficult to derive communication propositions from the knowledge that individual seek environmental control, and that their self-esteem is contingent upon their success in this effort. In addition, adaptability is an ambiguous and ill-defined construct. It implies a chameleon-like tendency to change with each context. Yet, the origins of this malleability, and its relationship to positive interaction with the environment, have not been elaborated.

Linguistic Competence

Normal development within a culture necessitates at least a rudimentary knowledge of the operant social norms. Communication functions both to develop and regulate the communicative norms of a particular cultural milieu. Communication is used to create and control itself. In these processes of creation and control, communication involves rules for the construction and interpretation of linguistic codes, rules for the regulation of linguistic utterances, and requirements for listener-adaptation of speech. These three

functions of linguistically and communicatively competent speech are roughly equivalent to the concepts of constitutive and regulative rules and the informational requirements of external dialogue. Linguistic competence is concerned primarily with constitutive rules.

The construction rules of language form a grammar of communication; an interpretive framework (Pearce, 1976). Linguistic competence is primarily a grammar and meaning centered construct. "Linguistic competence is generally defined by both psycholinguists and psychometricians in terms of ability to handle semantic and syntactic relations between verbal symbols" (Bucci & Freedman, 1978, p. 595). According to Larson (1978), it refers to knowledge of the underlying structure of the language; more specifically, knowledge of the rules which govern the production of language episodes, utterances, or sentences" (p. 304). This type of knowledge is inculcated through the education and enculturation process (Kagan, 1979), and presumably becomes largely a form of tacit intuition. The rules may become codified formally, but are typically, informal and culturally idiosyncratic.

Linguistic competence requires an adequate understanding of the constructive and interpretive processes involved in communicative encounters enacted according to a cultural ideal. It is in this sense that Habermas (1970) refers to

> The ideal speaker's mastery of the dialogue constitutive universals irrespectable of the actual restrictions under empirical conditions . . .
>
> Thus, the idealization exists in the fact that we suppose an exclusively linguistic organization of speech and interaction (pp. 141, 146).

Theorists have attempted to delineate this linguistic organization in terms of types of meaning (Jakebivits, 1969, 1970) and word-referent linkages (Bucci & Freedman, 1978). The loci of linguistic competence, linguistic knowledge and meaning, are intrapersonal in nature. The focus, unlike efficacy oriented constructs, is on the communication involved instead of the communicative outcomes.

Theorists of linguistic competence have attempted to identify and isolate linguistic universals. Although not a futile effort (see Chomsky, 1969), this is certainly a limited and insufficient effort. It is becoming obvious that contexts play an integral role in assessing the appropriateness of a linguistic utterance (Trenholm & Rose, 1981). As a result, theorists tend to differentiate between ideal or universal inguistic competence, and communicative competence within a particular social context or situation.

> Thus, competence has been extended from the notion of the mastery of a set of syntactical rules to the mastery of a set of cultural rules which include the appropriate way to

> apply syntactical rules in all speech situations possible for the society (Sankoff, 1974, p. 18).

This distinction has been echoed by several theorists and provides the basic distinction between linguistic and communicative competence (Black, 1978; Casden, 1978; Grimshaw, 1971; Hymes, 1972; Mathews, 1978; Paulston, 1974; Rivers, 1973).

Communicative Competence

When an individual violates a grammatical rule, certain culturally imbued expectations on the part of the interactants may also be violated. If responses to the violation attempt to rectify the situation by negatively sanctioning the deviant messages, then a regulative rule is also operative (Pearce & Cronen, 1979). Obviously, interactants have expectations regarding appropriateness of behavior that extend beyond merely grammatical correctness. The point is that the sanctionability of communicative rules implies a criterion of communication competence. Competent communication must avoid significant violation, qualitatively and quantitatively, of the social norms and expectations governing the situation. In short, to be considered communicatively competent, communication must be socially appropriate (Larson, Backlund, Redmond & Barbour, 1978). "Appropriateness then, appears to be the single criterion with the power to discriminate the phenomenon of communication competence from other communicative phenomena" (Backlund, 1977, p. 15).

Appropriateness is typically conceived as a broad based societal norm. As Larson (1978) states concisely, "The sufficient condition for communicative competence is that the communicative act not violate the social norms of the group or context within which the act occurred" (p. 308). This condition implies that

> communicative competence . . . not only includes the concept of grammatically but also the concept of appropriateness . . . In other words, a response may be perfectly grammatical according to purely linguistic rules but totally inappropriate when the other sociolinguistic factors are taken into consideration" (Briere, Note 2, 1979).

The necessity of including both ideal and actual appropriateness led Hymes (1972) to argue that "competence is dependent upon both (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use" (p. 282). Greene (1977) concurs

> that what is needed for a complete theory of language is to equip the language speaker both with a systematic knowledge of the mapping rules between linguistic forms and potential meanings (the domain of Chomsky's theory) and, equally, with a systematic knowledge of how to map linguistic meanings on to the actual meanings appropriate

to their use in specific contexts (as Serle and Halliday are trying to do) (p. 89).

A second criterion that characterizes competent communication is listener-adaptation. Whereas fundamental competence implies generic adaptation to the environment, and linguistic competence implies adaptation to an implicit set of cultural and grammatical rules, communication competence tends to focus on adapting to a specific interactional context and the interactants involved. Krauss and Glucksberg (1969) maintain that linguistic competence is simply grammatical correctness, whereas communicative competence involves adjustment to the informational requirements of the listener. Similarly, Larson (1978) indicates that the necessary condition for competent communication is meeting the informational functions of the situation by maintaining "a logical consistency among or between the acts" that a person initiates or responds to (p. 308). Knapp (1978) also proposes a definition that emphasizes the appropriate adaptation of symbols to "the self-other-topic situation interface . . . " (p. 275). Competent communication, then is linguistically and socially appropriate and functionally adequate for the decoding needs of the interactant(s). As Grimshaw (1971) summarizes, "'communicative competence' describes the ability of individuals to communicate with one another under situationally and normatively defined conditions (linguistic, psychological, social, and pragmatic in nature)" (p. 162).

Communicative competence is placed within the person x situation by communication category of Table 1 because the focus is on the communication within specified sociocultural contexts. Appropriateness should not be confused as an outcome characteristic, because it is intended by most authors as a defining characteristic. An appropriate interaction may or may not achieve the desired outcomes of the interactants. The question, instead, us usually whether or not the interactants are aware of the appropriate rules. For the investigator of communicative competence, three foci are salient: constitutive rules, regulative rules, and the informational adaptation of the speech to the actual or imagined listener. Appropriateness and informational adaptation are viewed not as outcomes of the interaction, but as characteristics of the process. Any number of outcomes are possible given either competent or incompetent dialogue. Outcomes per se are not the primary focus of communicative competence.

The primary difficulties with most conceptualizations of communicative competence regrad the social rather than the interpersonal criteria of appropriateness. Presumably, social and cultural norms are easier to identify, and thus, more parsimonious for a theory of communicative competence. However, interpersonal encounters, especially those in which the interactants have an established relational history, are likely to operate according to idiosyncratic rules instead of social norms (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Cushman & Craig, 1976; Millar & Rogers, 1976; Miller & Steinberg, 1975). As Weinstein (1966) indicates, the "rules of polite intercourse are most likely to be violated in relationships to which commitment is the strongest" (p. 398). That is, social norms may be violated completely

if the relationship has established new or unique norms. Furthermore, inappropriate behavior is often undertaken for a specific reason by the interactant. For example, an "inappropriate" amount of eye contact may designate that A simply does not intend to pay credence to B. While inappropriate in terms of a social norm, it is the only appropriate action for A's point of view (Wardley, 1979). Stated differently, communication can be socially appropriate, yet quite inappropriate to the interpersonal context, and vice versa.

Social Skills and Social Competence

Fundamental competence presumes motivation, ability, and adaptiveness. Notions of linguistic and communicative competence presume knowledge of the constitutive, regulative, and informational functions of interaction. These concepts also assume the existence of certain skills by which competent interaction is effected. Social skills and social competence models attempt to focus on the underlying skill components that form the basis of effective and appropriate interaction. Examination of several conceptualizations of competence reveals three essential skill constellations: empathy, role-taking, and interaction management.

Empathyis commonly defined synonymously with role taking ability (e.g., Cottrell & Dymond, 1949; Dymond, 1948, 1949; Dymond, Hughes & Raabe, 1952; Foote & Cottrell, 1955; Weinstein, 1969). Mead (1934/1974) avoided this equivocality to some extent by defining role-taking as a cognitive rather than emotional phenomenon. This distinction is clarified by Kelly, Osborne, and Hendrick (1974) who posit that "empathy is not synonymous with role-taking . . . In general, empathy refers to some kind of motor mimicry.

Empathy does not, however, involve one's taking account of, analysis of, and adaptation to the role of another as does role-taking" (p. 67). This implies a basic differ between vicarious affective experience and cognitive decentering (Campbell, Kagan & Krathwohl, 1971; Hoffman, 1977; Keefe, 1976; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972; Ststland, Mathews, Sherman, Hansonn & Richardson, 1978). In other words, role-taking involves "a mental and imaginative construction of another's role for purposes of interactive facilitation, adaptation and identity management. "Empathy, on the other hand, is an emotional reaction to, or an affective experience of, another's emotional state" (Spitzberg, 1980, p. 5). Although distinct processes, empathic responses inform the cognitions involved in role-taking, and role-taking in turn provides constructive frameworks for interpreting empathic experiences. Together, these two abilities account for the generic concept of adaptiveness (Flavell, et.al., 1968; Hale & Delia, 1976; Hart & Burks, 1972; Stryker, 1957). By role-taking or empathizing with another person, one is better able to predict the responses of that other to messages and communicative cues (Gompertz, 1966; Lane, 1981). The understanding and prediction of others afforded by these abilities provide one with the requisite information to adapt to the other and the situation. In addition, by taking the role of others, a person acquires the various roles,

cognitive constructs, and behavioral lines of action of others. This allows an individual to internalize a behavioral repertoire of acts and to adapt to the construct system of the listener (Hale, 1980). Finally, highly empathic individuals are likely to possess prosocial motivations that facilitate interaction and other-oriented behavior (Hoffman, 1977; Staub, 1978).

The importance of role-taking and empathy to competent interaction is demonstrated by the findings of two studies. Cottrell and Dymond (1949) contrast two groups of individuals differing in empathy and role-taking ability. The highly empathic individuals were

> emotionally expressive, outgoing, optimistic, warm people, who had a strong interest in others. They are flexible people . . . Those low in the ampathy score are rather rigid, introverted people . . . who are . . . unable to deal with concrete material and interpersonal relations very well (0. 359).

In a study of interpersonal skills, D'Augelli (1973) describes a strikingly similar finding. Individuals rated as high in interpersonal skills "were seen as significantly more empathetically understanding, as more honest and open with their feelings, as warmer and more accepting and . . . less set in their ways" (p. 533). There appears to be considerable isomorphism between competence and the skills of empathy and role-taking. For example, Rochner and Yerby (1977) concluded that persons high in empathy are likely to acquire other related interpersonal skills as well. Decentering leads to the experience of other people's interactional repertoires, and for highly empathic persons, internalization of these repertoires. The above studies also indicate that role-taking and empathic abilities may engender skillful management of dialogue.

By enhancing the interpretation of identity and message information, role-taking and empathic abilities allow better adjustment of responses and directions of dialogue in response to the other interactant (Bronfenbrenner, Harding & Gallwey, 1958). Management of the communication should thus be more satisfying to the interactants. According to Wiemann (1977),

> Interaction management is concerned with the "procedural" aspects that structure and maintain interaction. These include initiation and termination of the encounter, the allocation of speaking turns, and control of topics discussed. Skillful interaction management is defined as the ability to handle these procedural matters in a manner that is mutually satisfactory to all participants (p. 199).

The rationale for placing social competence and skills in the person X situation by outcome cell of Table 1 is clarified by an elaboration of the notion of "skills." Skills imply an ability to achieve a goal. A skill cannot

be assessed accurately without regard to its actual application in a given task or functional situation (e.g., above, Wiemann defines interaction management in terms of satisfactory results). Thus extant conceptualizations argue for outcome oriented definitions of social skills. Steffen and Redden (1977) provide such a skills-in-use approach, in that a socially adept person must be able to "emit skilled responses" and "to perceive and interpret subsequent feedback cues" (p. 31). It is typical to assess social skills or social competence by outcome measures such as hetersocial attractiveness or anxiety, dating frequency, or marital satisfaction. The fact that application of skills is essential to assessment of social skills is indicated by the predominance of role-playing as the methodology of shoice among social skills researchers (Bellack, Bersen & Lamparski, 1979). The skills are located within the person, but are assessed only in accordance with their successful or unsuccessful application within specific contexts. As Eisler (1978) aptly states, "it is not only the observed behaviors which must be judged as relatively skilled or unskilled, but the interaction of those behaviors within a specific interpersonal context" (pp. 372-373).

Of all the various conceptualizations, social skills and social competence are the most difficult to characterize and categorically define. Under the aegis of social skills, constructs have been classified throughout the entire taxonomy. As a result, it is difficult to criticize such an all-encompassing set of conceptualizations. Nevertheless, two criticisms are warranted. First, most social skills models operate with the naive assumption that certain skills form criteria for competence in all encounters (e.g., Argyle, 1969; Cushman & Craig, 1976). Certain models, for example, have assumed that social sensitivity is a universally required skill for competent interaction. Yet, it is not difficult to imagine situations in which extreme social sensitivity is damaging or stultifying to the process of interaction and/or the interactants. For example, too much social sensitivity in a group setting can lead to indecisiveness and difficulty in achieving task solutions, possibly due to excessive attention shown to competing concerns (Steiner, 1955). Such exceptions have led several researchers and theorists to apologize for a general inability to find universally essential social skills (Arkowitz, 1977; Barlow, Abel, Blanchard, Bristow & Young, 1977; Dow, Glaser & Biglan, 1980; Gambrill, 1977; Koffman, Getter & Chinsky, 1978). Representative of this school is Eisler (1978) who admits that, "At present there are no generally agreed upon definitions of social which apply to all interpersonal situations (p. 370).

A far more damaging criticism is that social skills currently are ill-defined in terms of their very nature and effects. As Arkowitz (1977) pessimistically explains:

> Thus far, the research has not yet pointed to any specific behavioral components of social skill.

> Most attempts at the measurement of social skill have emphasized either glogal ratings or the frequency of verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Simple frequency counts of behaviors probably do not adequately reflect the subtleties relating to timing and reciprocity of interactional behavior (p. 55).

Although progress has been made in this direction (e.g., Doe et al., 1980; Gottman, 1979; Kupke, Calhoun & Hobbs, 1979; Kupke, Hobbs & Cheney, 1979), there is still a dearth of specific behavioral criteria that can be applied to interactions. Such behavioral criteria are vital to the development of a communication theory of competent interaction. Yet, most social skills models have not progressed to the point that they can contribute precise predictions tor behavioral criteria. As Shatz (1977) points out,

> component skills models have little to say about the conditions under shich competence in the various components will be displayed. What these models do is cut the explanatory pie into smaller pieces, ...But possible interactions among those pieces still receive no systematic treatment. The end result is that . . . Performance is assessed in terms of success or failure, and a subskill as present or absent. However, performances might better be considered as falling on a continuum from some ideal of success to complete failure (p. 33).

An even more limiting factor is that many researchers are studying social skills with no conceptual framework to ground their investigation. It is becoming common to study specific conversational behaviors in laboratory setting, define them as socially skilled or unskilled on the basis of a priori criteria, and then have observers rate the skillfulness of the subjects. In this line of research, behaviors are equated with skills, and the cognitive, affective, or personality characteristics that may underly these behaviors are ignored entirely. While it is inappropriate to equate skills with personality characteristics, it is equally limiting to equate skills solely with behaviors, because skill performance requires cognitive operations in addition to behavioral operations. To ignore either is to restrict theoretic rigor.

The corrective for these problems is, as Shatz (1977) suggests, that skills be more clearly conceptualized in relation to each other and in terms of their normative and ideal boundaries. For example, instead of viewing "social sensitivity" as a universal criterion on competence, it could be specified in terms of subskills (e.g., role-taking, empathy, listening, cueing, etc.), and viewed as a curvilinear indicator of competence (e.g., competence increases with increasing social sensitivity from low to high ranges,

but decreases with extreme ranges of sensitivity). Such propositions could be further specified by contextual considerations. For instance, situations that are highly structured and already socially defined may not require these skills (e.g., the normal greeting ritual). Thus, skills models require greater rigor and specificity in their conceptualizations than they presently provide.

Interpersonal and Strategic Competence

Foote and Cottrell (1955) coined the neologism of "interpersonal competence" to encompass the process by which an individual escaped "progressively from the control of his immediate environment and begins to control it" (p. 41). Thus, as an ability for performing particular kinds of tasks, interpersonal competence involves health, intelligence, empathy, autonomy, judgement, and creativity (Foote & Cottrell, 1955; Stanton & Litwak, 1955). In this conceptualization, empathy and creativity are concerned with role-taking ability and behavioral repertoires. Autonomy is essentially a manifestation of self-concept, and judgement is simply making correct decisions.

For Argyris (1962, 1965a, 1965b), competence involves a set of continua in which the positive behaviors are experimenting, openness, and owning up to one's behavior. These behavioral dimensions represent an individual's ability (and ability of the others involved) to solve interpersonal problems (1968, p. 750) with "minimal deterioration of the problem-solving process" (1965a, p. 59).

The idea that interpersonal competence involves the ability to solve relational problems is reflected in much of the literature. For example, Spivack, Platt, and Shure (1976) conceptualize a set of "interpersonal cognitive problem-solving (ICPS) skills that mediate the quality of our social adjustment" (p. 4). These skills include awareness of potential interpersonal problems, ability to generate solutions, and ability to specify the means to implement these solutions. Rose, Cayner, and Edelson (1977) assess competence similarly by performing the steps of "(1) situational analysis, (2) response enumeration, (3) response evaluation," and formulating the measurement instrument based on these findings (p. 126). This conceptualization is, in turn, based on the behavior-analytic approach to assessing competence developed by Goldfried and D'Zurilla (1969). They operationally define competence as the "effectiveness or adequacy with which an individual is capable of responding to the various problematic situations which confront him" (p. 161). The behavior-analytic approach was also adopted by Levenson and Gottman (1979) and Steffen, Greenwald and Langmeyer (1979) in studying dating problems. Finally, Parks (1977) defines communication competence as "a function of the communicator's ability to exert control over his or her physical and social surround-

ings" (p. 1). While "control" is more inclusive than "problem-solution," the steps involved in control are similar to those of problem-solving: goal-specification, information-acquisition, prediction-making, strategy selection, strategy implementation, and environmental testing. This conceptualization emphasizes two important features of most interpersonal competence constructs: goal achievement and strategic orientation.

Goal achievement is a common defining characteristic of competent interaction according to several theorists. Prototypical of this orientation is Weinstein's (1969) definition of interpersonal competence as "the ability to manipulate other's responses . . . relative to the actor's purposes" (p. 755). This is clearly an outcome-oriented conceptualization, in which "effectiveness" in achieving desired outcomes is the primary defining characteristic of component interaction. Effectiveness can be located within a single individual with regard to goal-achievement. Yet, most conceptualizations of interpersonal competence have recognized the necessity of including skills for dealing with others (e.g., Thayer, 1968). Thus, according to Bochner and Kelly (1974), "interpersonal competence can be judged by the following three criteria: (1) ability to formulate and achieve objectives; (2) ability to collaborate effectively with others; i.e., to be interdependent; and (3) ability to adapt appropriately to situational or environmental variations" (p. 288). Five years later, Kelly, Chase and Wiemann (1979) conceptualize competence somewhat differently: "An interpersonally competent communicator will be able to interact with others so as to increase his or her quantity of relevant information in an effort to engage in adaptive behavior" (p. 24). Still, the defining characteristic is "an effort to engage in adaptive behavior" and this revolves around achieving a desired response (i.e., level of information).

The other salient feature, stratetic orientation, has found elaboration in the works of Coffman (1969), Thayer (1968), and Clark and Delia (1979). Strategies are formulated and implemented in order to achieve an objective or objectives. Goffman (1969) elaborates the defining conditions of strategic interaction, with certain aspects displaying qualities similar to those of the decision-making and problem-solving conceptualizations discussed earlier.

> Two of more parties must fine themselves in a well-structured situation of mutual impingement where each party must make a move and where every possible move carries fateful implications for all of the parties. In this situation, each player must influence his own decision by his knowing that the other players are likely to try to dope out his decision in advance, and may even appreciate that he knows this is likely. Courses of action or

> moves will then be made in light of one's thoughts about this other's thoughts about oneself (pp. 100-101).

This illustrates one of the more overlooked features of "interpersonal" conceptualizations of competence. Specifically, Goffman (1969) is stressing the mutual interdependence of the "competent gamester" with another person, both having some control over outcomes of the interaction. Whereas Parks (1977) and Argyris (1965a), for example, stress the individual's ability to achieve desired outcomes, Goffman (1969) emphasizes that desired outcomes are strategically framed within an interdependent context.

Recognizing the interdependence involved in communicating effectively, Thayer (1968) defines strategic competence in communication as an individual's ability veridically (or accurately) to perceive or intuit or comprehend the state-relationship between himself and some aspect of his environment (e.g., between himself and the other(s) whom he wishes to communicate-to or by whom he wishes to be communicated-with) (p. 131).

Thayer adds the concept of tactical competencies (skills), which are used to implement strategic competencies in order to effectively control communication. Thus, in many ways Thayer's approach is a conceptual precurson or Park's (1977) and Weinstein's (1969) perspectives.

Clark and Delia (1979) take a different approach to competence, defining a construct of rhetorical competence as "purposive, strategic message formulation . . ." (p. 193). Their approach is message and objective oriented rather than skills oriented. They identify fundamental objectives (instrumental, interpersonal, and identity) which are served by communication, and then establish the importance of studying the messages through which these objectives are fulfilled.

Two intractable problems inhere in these conceptions of interpersonal competence. First, effectiveness of goal-achievement, control, and fulfillment of desired outcomes all define end-states instead of interaction processes. Although competence is viewed as located in the appropriate adaptation to others within specific contexts, the actual focus is not on the interaction involved, but the success of the interaction. This points to a critical distinction emphasized by the taxonomy presented here. The difference, for example, between a problem-solving and effectiveness appraoch versus a communicative competence appraoch, is considerable. The former orientations place priority on goal-achievement and satisfactory outcomes. The latter is concerned primarily with perceptions of approapriateness. This dichotomy represents the distinction of focus between outcomes and communication processes. If our discipline is interested in developing process oriented theories of communication, then focusing exclusively on outcomes is a limiting means of constructing such theories. What is

needed is a conceptual linkage between processes and outcomes; between communication and functional success. This is recognized but largely unfulfilled in the Clark and Delia (1979) perspective.

Second, terms such as "problem-solving" and "goal-achievement" imply a high level of intentionality and consciousness. In addition, the constructs of Parks (1977), Bochner and Kelly (1974), and Goffman (1969) all suggest a high degree of strategic orientation. That is, individuals are competent because they are able to formulate and successfully implement strategies designed to achieve planned or conscious goals. Yet, reward attainment need not be related to any particular intentional desire. For example, Thorngate (1976) indicates that several interaction management skills are habitualized due to internal gratification reactions. As a result, higher-order thought processes are not requisite to competent interaction in familiar encounters. Hecht (1978a) theorizes that competent interactions result in fulfillment of positive expectancies that result in internally satisfying reinforcement. Expectancies, in the tradition of behaviorist psychologies, need not be conceptualized as conscious.

Intentionality of behavior is a troublesome assumption. Even Goffman (1969) admits that

> persons often don't know what game they are in or whom they are playing for until they have already played . . . Knowing their own possible moves, they may be quite unable to make any estimate of the liklihood of the various outcomes or the value to be placed on each of them (p. 119).

Such sentiments have been echoed recently by writers in the field of communication. Delia (1980) argues that our "emphasis on processes of psychological decision-making tends to direct attention away from consideration of the role of the social context in structuring our implicit decisions concerning relationships" (p. 97). A more serious criticism comes from Berger (1980) who claims that "The tendency for those who study communication behavior to over attribute self-consciousness to participants in everyday interactions has led, perhaps to the development of unrealistic theories" (p. 94). Berger (1980), Seibold and Spitzberg (Note 1), Taylor and Fiske (1978), and Yardley (1979) all persuasively argue that individuals probably do not have considerable access to information regarding appropriateness, superordinate goals, or sub-goals. The assumption of intentionality may or may not be accurate. However, to further communication theory it may be necessary to assume that strategic interaction need not by definition involve conscious forethought. As Lofland (1981) maintains,

> Actions have strategic consequences in, upon, and on a situation regardless of whether anyone in that situation consciously intends those consequences.

> "Unthinking," "mindless," "habitual," "routine," action does not necessarily lack strateic significance (consequences or import) simply because the person performing it does not consciously perceive or intend strategic significance (p. 53).

This position would expand the circumference of interest to include potentially all interaction, since all interaction is potentially strategic in impact. To assume that competent interaction only occurs when individuals consciously intend to produce certain effects, and strategically accomplish these effects, is to limit the occurence of identifiable interpersonally competent interaction to a small amount of all communicative interaction.

Relational Competence

A final construct category represents truly relational constructs, hence the label "relational competence." Most of the criticisms applied to the former models have been accounted for by relational concepts. Still, to some degree this category is a pot pourri of various conceptualizations that focus on the interactive processes leading to satisfactory outcomes. Thus, these constructs could be placed in an outcome category, were it not for their emphasis on the linkage of communication with outcomes. This category represents the type of "perspective in which the importance of goal achievement, communication skills, and sensitivity to both situations and other persons are equally stressed" (Brandt, 1979, p. 225). The salient features and strengths of these conceptualizations are: (1) the conceptual relations drawn between competent communication and competent outcomes, and (2) the inclusion of dyadic competence and outcome criteria for evaluation of competence.

Behavioral theorists have begun to investigate communication behaviors from a reinforcement perspective. These investigators hope to isolate the types of behavioral interaction that consistently provide high levels of reinforcement for the participants. Gambrill (1977) describes social skill as consituted in

> receiving positive events from others, in removing annoying or unpleasant ones, and avoiding behaviors that are punished or ignored by others. The advantage of this definition is that it has an efficiency concept built in. Not only does the competent person secure high levels of reinforcement from others, but he does so efficiently; that is, without performing many behaviors that are ignored or punished (p. 532). Similarly, Hersen and Bellack (1977) emphasize an individual's ability to express both positive and negative feelings in the interpersonal context without suffering consequent loss of social reinforcement. Such

> skill is demonstrated in a large variety of interpersonal contexts . . . and it involves the coordinated delivery of appropriate verbal and nonverbal responses (p. 512).

These perspectives focus upon particular behaviors that are efficiently and positively reinforcing in an interpersonal context.

Although not as process-oriented as the behavioral perspective, several conceptualizations have utilized similar concepts such as satisfaction and reinforcement as types of criteria of competence. In this sense, satisfaction replaces the notion of operant reinforcement and offers a generic definition of competent interaction: interaction is competent to the extent that it is satisfying to the participants involved. Satisfaction is a practical criterion inasmuch as it subsumes such constructs as problem-solving, goal-achievement, and to some extent, appropriateness. In this regard, O'Mally (1977) describes social competence for children in terms of productive and mutually satisfying interactions in which, "Interactions will be satisfying to the child when goals are attained, and to the others if actions in pursuit of the goals are received in either a benign or positive manner" (p. 29). And Fitts (1970) defines interpersonal competence simply as "the ability to establish and maintain mutually satisfying relationships with a variety of people across diverse situations" (p. 61). Although very outcome oriented, Fitts (1970) explains that good communication (i.e., the ability to communicate on a feeling level) is the key to establishing satisfying relationships. Bennis and his colleagues (1973) utilize a similar criterion of competence in relationships, but go into greater detail regarding the types of relational interactions leading to satisfaction.

A third perspective within this category could be labeled "other-oriented" interaction. In this perspective, an individual is considered competent to the extent that the other person in the conversation is attended to appropriately. In this perspective, Feingold (1977) explains that

> the effective communicator will be perceived as other-oriented. 1. The effective communicator will be perceived as able to appropriately adapt his/her communication to different others. 2. The effective communicator will be perceived as committed to his/her message. 3. The effective communicator will be perceives as an empathic listener who gives feedback to others (p. 4698A).

This type of other-orientation is reflected also in the relational perspective of Wiemann (1977). For Wiemann (1977), "The competent communicator is the person who can have his way in the relationship while maintaining a mutually acceptable definition of that relationship" (p. 198). This definition emphasizes the characteristics

running throughout conceptualizations of relational competence: the linkage of appropriate and effective communication with outcomes or goals. As Cupach and Spitzberg (1981) argue,

> Appropriateness and effectiveness characterize the process of competent interaction. The outcomes of this process are behavioral, cognitive, or emotional, and ultimately, satisfying . . . In short, relationally competent communication is satisfying because it fulfills certain needs, goals, or functions for the actors involved. . . . Relational competence, therefore, manifests itself in the process of communication that results in mutually satisfying outcomes for the participants . . . (p. 5).

This conceptualization clearly portrays satisfaction as an outcome of competent interaction. The reason, however, that this particular definition is not placed in the outcomes category of Table 1 is that the research involved the investigation of fairly specific communicative behaviors that were related to satisfying dialogue.

An intriguing finding of the Cupach and Spitzberg (1981) research is that a person's estimate of self-competence (when combined with perceptions of partner competence) is a very weak predictor of communication satisfaction. By far, the most important factor in explaining communication satisfaction is an actor's perception of her/his partner's competence (explaining 50 percent of the variance of communication satisfaction). This further justifies a relational categorization and perspective, since the individual's skills and abilities are apparently not as important as are the individual's perceptions of the skills of the partner. This finding also lends tangential credence to the other-oriented view of competence. It makes sense that A feels satisfied in a conversation to the extent that B attends to A's communicative efforst, cues, and behaviors. This comports with the findings of Feingold (1977), Dow, Glaser, and Biglan (1980), and Kupke and colleagues (Kupke et al., 1979), who found that personal attention behaviors significantly predicted heterosexual attraction and skill ratings. Personal attention was operationalized in the Kupke et al, (1979) experiments by the conversational behavior of using the pronoun "you" when interacting with a partner. Being "you" oriented is a behavioral manifestation of other-orientation. In the Dow et al, (1980) experiment, questions and compliments were predictive of skill ratings.

It should be clear by now that the relational competence perspective is conceptually heuristic, and will be the perspective utilized in this project in elaborating an integrative model. An important point yet to be considered concerns the confusion of outcome and process. At this point, several conceptualizations define competent

interaction by the results produced (e.g., desired outcomes, goal achievement). Examination of an hypothetical example may clarify a problem with this approach. Presume that A's objective is to get a date with B. A initiates a conversation with B, in which B attends to A and displays interest and mild enjoyment with the conversation, but declines A's request for a date because B is committed already to another intimate partner. Are we to conclude that A is interpersonally incompetent in this interaction?

First, the relational perspective does not ask solely whether A's objectives were met. Instead, it is important to know if the dyad was satisfied with the encounter. Secondly, was the communication appropriate? Was it functionally adequate? Did it communicate the meanings the actors intended? These questions bear directly upon the notion of competence in communication. These questions pertain to generic communicative functions (tacit) in addition to communicative objectives (perceptually salient). Thus, in this example, even though A's communication "failed" to produce the originally desired outcome, both A and B may be satisfied with the episode because it was appropriately handled, A's communication functioned effectively to establish contact, and A's "face" was maintained by B. And B, who may not have a specific objective, nevertheless maintained the conversation without damaging self or alter communicatively. While A may be distressed with one of the outcomes, the communicative process was performed competently. Further, it is entirely possible that a new friendship developed in the course of the conversation could result in A's satisfaction, despite her/his original objective. This is not to say that the conversation was entirely competent. It is to say that there are more complex considerations than simply the achievement of extent objective of the actors. It is also to say that a comprehensive view of relational competence requires a consideration of multiple indicators or criteria by which to assess communicative adequacy.

Summary of Review

Each approach to competence emphasizes different aspects of human endeavor and action. Fundamental competence focuses on successful attainment of objectives through adaptive behavior. A typical theory adduced to explain adaptive behavior is effectance motivation. This class of constructs locates competence intrapersonally. Linguistic competence focuses on knowledge of correct and appropriate communicative forms. Because knowledge of communication is stressed, explanation of linguistic competence is also an intrapersonal construct, but one which locates the individual in a specific cultural mileau. Communicative competence extends knowledge of correct and appropriate linguistic form into a social context. This conceptuali-

zation concerns whether a message or set of messages is grammatically correct and socially appropriate for a situation. While social in nature, communication competence is still a speaker-centered construct. Social competence and social skills constructs often refer to the importance of communication processes, yet define competence in terms of behavioral outcomes. Typically, social competence and social skills are conceptualized as individual abilities that produce speech and behavior appropriate to a given social situation. Social competence is also a speaker or individual type of explanatory construct. The criteria used to assess social competence are usually observer ratings of attractiveness, assertiveness, appropriateness, etc. Interpersonal and strategic competence perspectives concern interactive success and effectiveness. The primary concern in these constructs is the effectiveness with which an individual achieves her/his goals in interpersonal situations. Thus, interpersonal and strategic competence approaches stress interpersonal communication within contexts. At this juncture, relational competence can be defined as the extent to which communicative objectives and functions are fulfilled through cooperative interaction appropriate to the interpersonal context. This construct assesses the communicative behavior that achieves interactant goals through communication that is appropriate to the interpersonal relationship. Relational competence is also primarily concerned with interpersonal, rather than personal, factors of competence.

The common denominators of this taxonomy are appropraiteness and effectiveness. Despite the centrality of these criteria, nowhere are they precisely or operationally defined in the competence literature. The model offered here attempts to delineate several criteria in addition to appropriateness and effectiveness.

II. MODEL OF RELATIONAL COMPETENCE

Assumptions

Before elaborating an integrative model of relational competence, the following assumptions should be explicated.

(1) Communication is functional as well as frequently goal oriented. Assuming that all or most communication is intentional and constantly purposive may be flattering, but it is also likely to be overoptimistic (Langer, Black & Chanowitz, 1978; Miller & Berger, 1978; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Thorngate, 1976). To recast communication as potentially explicable by tacit objectives (Clark & Delia, 1979) as well as conscious reasons is more useful theoretically (Toulmin, 1969, 1974). Individuals are capable of overlearning communicative episodes and regulatory cues. To this extent, everyday interactions may

involve several functions in addition to specific goals.

(2) Given that communicative functions are served tacitly, communicatively competent interaction need not be purposive in effects and outcomes (Yardley, 1979). In initial interactions and beyond, for example, much of the greeting ritual and subsequent experimenting may be relatively "programmed" or reactive. In addition, whatever search and decision-making is performed may be largely unrelated to alternative functions being fulfilled tacitly by the complexities of the interactive process.

(3) Given that communication is functional, and that functions vary in their salience to the actor, it is assumed that communication can serve several functions/goals simultaneously. Therefore, competent communication is likely to result in multiple outcomes. There is no intrinsic reason why communication cannot function to maintain self and other faces, result in proper informational exchange, achieve episodic and relational satisfaction, and simultaneously achieve specific conversational goals. Of course, in a given situation certain objectives functions may be more perceptually salient than others.

(4) Competence is contextually framed (Garrison & Powell, 1977; Garrison, Sullivan & Pate, 1976; Gottman, 1979; Powel, 1979; Rathjen, 1980; Thenholm & Rose, 1981). Standards of appropriate and effective behavior vary by relationship contexts (Helper, 1970; Knapp, Ellis & Williams, 1980) and environmental/social contexts (Price & Boufard, 1974). This is not to say that all judgements of competence are affective substantially by contextual variables. It does imply that assessment methods must be sensitive to such factors.

(5) Given the complexity of the communication process as indicated in the assumptions above, the assessment of competence must also be complex. Specifically, competence is manifested in both the behaviors and the perceptions of the interactants. Only the behaviors of the interactants can communicate. However, only the interactant's evaluations can inform the researcher of the actual competence of the communication. Since competence is relationally contextualized, only the participants in a relationship can accurately judge the competence of behaviors enacted within such a context. Therefore, both molecular characteristics (i.e., specific behaviors perceived by the actors) and molar characteristics (i.e., episodic evaluations of

> the actors) must be assessed if an adequate understanding of competence is to be achieved. Only in this way will communicative behavior be linked with actor perceptions of competence and perceived outcomes.

Components of Relational Competence

Theory and research increasingly point to three basic components of individual competence: motivation, knowledge, and skill (see Argyle, 1969, p. 320; Clinard, 1979; Knapp, 1978; Thayer, 1968). An individual must know how to interact competently with particular individuals in specific contexts. Even knowing how to interact does not guarantee possession of the requisite skills for implementing that knowledge. And possessing both knowledge and ability to interact competently does not necessitate a desire to interact competently. To use a dramaturgical metaphor developed by Ring, Braginsky, and Braginsky (1966), an actor cannot perform competently if s/he is not motivated to perform. Further, being motivated to perform does not necessitate that the actors knows the script to perform. Finally, knowing the script and wanting to perform well do not guarantee that the actor is skilled in acting ability. A similar approach is taken by Powell (1979), who identifies three reasons why a person would interact incompetently:

> (1) The individual does not recognize the requirements of the situational form and, therefore, cannot adapt to it; (2) the individual recognizes the form, but chooses not to respond to it because the payoff is too low or the resistance too high; and (3) the individual recognizes the situational form, but does not have the necessary communication skills to respond appropriately (p. 141).

These reasons correspond to knowledge, motivation, and skill components of interaction.

The model is complicated by consideration of two interactants, rather than one. Before elaborating specific operational components of the model of relational competence, several general characteristics of the dyadic model need to be examined.

Presume a dyadic interaction between persons A and B in context C at Time T. Context C may possess several possible perceptually salient dimensions (e.g., Formal-informal, hostile-friendly, intimate-nonintimate, etc.). Both A and B possess certain motivations and knowledge domains associated with interaction in general, and the relationship and context in particular. In addition, A and B manifest certain communicative skills in their interaction. The model of relational competence proposed here, posits that the combination of A's and B's motivations to interact, knowledge reservoires associated with interaction, and perceived skills in the specific context, will provide a reasonable assessment of the competence of A and B in this

episode. In order to index the validity of this assessment, certain outcomes are postulated that should result from competent interaction. A strong conceptual and empirical argument exists that competent interaction is likely to create the following actor impressions; (1) satisfaction with the communication, (2) perception of having been confirmed by alter in the conversation, and (3) perception of the episode as having been appropriate and effective. Given these three major components and three outcomes, the general model proposes that as A's and B's combined motivational, knowledge, and performance competencies increase, so will their communication satisfaction, perceived confirmation, and perceptions of conversational appropriateness and effectiveness.

A question remains however, regarding how these competence components should be combined. Specifically, is relational competence an additive or multiplicative consequence of individual competencies? In other words, is relational competence best represented as an additive or a multiplicative combination of A's and B's motivation, knowledge, and skill? Certainly, processual views of communication have tended to emphasize the nonsummativity of interpersonal interaction. Nonsummativity refers to the "emergent quality" of interaction among reciprocally interdependent interactants (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967). Thus, a relationship entails more than the sum of its consituent parts or components (Fisher, 1978). Although nonsummativity is an assumption typically embraced by systems and pragmatic theorists, it is also implied by many diverse communication perspectives (e.g., Clark & Delia's constructivism, 1979; Knapp's relational evolution approach, 1978; Pearce's coordinated management of meaning, 1976). The logic is that the process of communication involves an intermeshing of individual components, which contribute to each other in such a way as to produce a phenomenon greater than the sum of the components. That is, individual components are interdependent, and therefore, interactive in a statistical sense (Fisher, 1981). In terms of relational competence, it is possible to conceive of instances in which A's and B's competence components are interdependent (e.g., A is such a skillful conversationalist that B is motivated to engage in interaction with A). Although a multiplicative combination of competence components is suggested by this analysis, there is insufficient reason to expect that all encounters entail such nonsummative dynamics. For instance, an encounter that is scripted or overlearned (e.g., greeting ritual) may involve little or no nonsummativity. Thus, it is an empirical question whether summative or multiplicative combinations of competence components best reflect relationally competent interaction.

Motivation. The motivational component has been conceptualized in numerous ways. Essentially, the motivation to communicate involves an individual's approach-avoidance reaction to a communicative context (Mehrabian & Russell, 1976). Any communicative situation presents a stimulus complex varying in degree of perceived reward and threat potential. This reward and threat potential, in turn, depends upon an individual's developmental history (Flavell, et.al., 1968; Sullivan, 1953), sense of efficacy (Harter, 1978; White, 1955), and contextual factors such as communicator objectives, situational norms, environmental characteristics, and alter's ability to provide reinforcements. Typically, communicative motivation has been studied in terms of self-concept and anxiety. Specifically, self-concept has been viewed as a generative mechanism of communication (Cushman & Craig, 1976). An individual is motivated to communicate in situations that possess potential to positively reinforce the communicator's self-concept. Further, interactional situations that threaten self-concept are likely to produce the response of anxiety, or communication apprehension. Thus, the tendency to approach or avoid communicative encounters depends in part upon a person's proclivity to become involved in and feel comfortable in interaction.

The construct of involvement in interaction has been elaborated by Cegala (1978, 1981). According to Cegala (1981), interaction involvement refers to

> the general tendency for an individual to demonstrate both attentiveness and perceptiveness in interactions. As such, it is considered a fundamentally important cognitive dimension of communicative competence (p. 112).

Interaction involvement represents a perceived tendency to engage actively and intentionally in conversations with particular sensitivity to self, alter, and context. It therefore reflects a motivational component involving a desire to approach communicative situations with perceptiveness, other-orientation, and attentiveness. Indeed, this motivational facet is reflected in Cegala's (1978) research, indicating small but statistically significant positive relationships between involvement and several competence variables, including aggressiveness, argumentativeness, persuasiveness, manipulativeness, and overall self-reported communicative competence. More recently, Cegala (1981) found involvement to substantially differentiate successful and unsuccessful individuals in a self-disclosure information-gathering task. Conceptually and empirically, communication involvement appears to represent a motivational component of communicative competence.

Whereas interaction involvement is a tendency to approach and actively engage in interaction, communication

apprehension represents an active avoidance of communicative contexts. Communication apprehension is a predisposition to experience anxiety in communicative situations. Communication apprehensives perceive themselves as shy, withdrawn, communicatively inadequate, passive, unaffiliative, and interpersonally ineffective (Burgoon, 1976; Daly, 1978; McCroskey, 1977; McCroskey, Daly & Sorenson, 1976; McCroskey, Richmond, Daly & Cox, 1975; McCroskey, Daly, Richmond & Falcione, 1977; Phillips, 1968; Filkonis, 1977a, 1977b; Rosenfeld & Plax, 1976; Spitzberg, 1981). There is little doubt, then, that communication apprehension is a motivational avoidance factor of communication, and that competent individuals are likely to lack apprehension.

Knowledge. Persons motivated to approach interactive contexts may still lack the knowledge of potentially effective and appropriate behavior. Knowledge includes familiarity with communicative rules (linguistic, social, and interpersonal), scripts (internalized schemas for responding and recognizing conversational forms and patterns), personal information (interpersonal constructs and behavioral cues), contextual information (episodic and situational forms), and the interface of these factors. Specifically, competent individuals are likely to actively monitor these factors, compare the current information to past experiences, and then assess the appropriate and most effective behavioral options available. This proclivity is conceptualized in the construct of self-monitoring.

> The prototypic high self-monitor is one who, out of a concern for the situational and interpersonal appropriateness of his or her social behavior, is particularly sensitive to the expression and self-presentation of relevant others in social situations and uses cues as guidelines for monitoring (that is, regulating and controlling) his or her own verbal and nonverbal self-presentation (Snyder, 1979b, p. 89).

Low self-monitors, in contrast, attend to their own internal affective and cognitive states rather than the dynamics of the external interaction. Research indicates that high self-monitors are "particularly knowledgeable about individuals who are prototypes of a wide variety of trait domains" (Snyder & Cantor, 1980, p. 222). To enhance this reservoir of knowledge, high self-monitors tend to be other-oriented by actively monitoring the actions of others in interaction (Brandt, Miller & Hocking, 1981; Brockner & Eckenrode, 1979; Ickes & Barnes, 1977; Rarick, Soldow & Geizer, 1976). Thus, self-monitoring reflects a tendency to acquire, possess, access, and use social information and knowledge.

Skill. Finally, the skill components of empathy (Dymond, 1949; Lane, 1981; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972; Spitzberg, 1980), role-taking ability (Chmielewski & Walf, 1979; Spitzberg, 1980), nonverbal expressiveness (Friedman, Prince, Riggie & DiMatteo, 1980), communication sensitivity (Neal & Highey, 1979), and composite competence constructs (Phelps & Snavely, 1980) have all been identified as important measures of competence. In all, these research lines continue to indicate that "other-orientation" appropriately describes a vital skill of competence (Cupach & Spitzberg, 1981; Feingold, 1977). Other-orientation is manifested through attentiveness, interest in alter, and several behaviors such as positive feedback, supportiveness, respect, and politeness. The importance of attentiveness as an other-oriented style is emphasized by Norton and Pettegrew (1979): "The attentive communicator focuses his/her regard toward the other while simultaneously signaling verbally and paraverbally that interest, concern, sensitivity, and notice are being shown" (p. 26). According to Norton and Pettegrew (1979), attentive communicators confirm other's self-concepts and enhance the enjoyment of the interaction. In their research, fully 75 percent of the variance of "being a good communicator" was accounted for by the communication attentiveness.

Another approach to communicative skill and other-orientation is that of Cupach and Spitzberg (1981). Their research indicated that competence is best assessed by alter, rather than self alone. That is, A's satisfaction is primarily due to A's perception of B's conversational competence. B's competence is conceptualized as a set of other-oriented behaviors combined with conversational skills, as perceived by a conversational partner. Behaviors and impressions included in this research are "positive feedback," "supportive," "cooperative," "polite," and "respectful" perceptions. Thus, other-oriented behavior appears to be a strong element of competent communication skills.

Interrelationships. The interrelationships of the motivation, knowledge, and skill components are likely to be complex. Ring, et.al., (1966; Ring, Braginsky, Levine and Braginsky, 1967; Ring & Walson, 1968) operationalized motivation, knowledge, and skill in interaction in the construct of performance styles. Three performance styles were identified: person (p), role (r), and chameleon (c). The p style characterizes relatively inflexible, socially anxious individuals. The r style is a socially adept, success-motivated, and appropriateness-minded acting orientation. The p and r are antipodal types. The c style represents a very adaptable and approval-motivated interactive orientation; a tendency to be whatever the context calls for. So performance styles are intended to tap all three components of the model. Research has shown

significant and substantial correlations of the person (-.51) and role (.52) styles with self-monitoring (Dabbs, Evans, Hopper & Purvis, 1980). In addition, a composite interpersonal communication competence measure, derived from factor analysis of four competence scales (Phelps & Snavely, 1980) correlates almost identically with the p (-.51) and r (.50) styles (Spitzberg, Note 3). (1981c)

Although this research indicates that there may be substantial relationships among the components, other research contradicts such an expectation. Self-monitoring, as a knowledge construct, does not appear to be related substantially to the skill constructs of nonverbal expressiveness (Cunningham, 1977; Friedman, et.al., 1980) or competence skill measures (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1981). And communication apprehension appears to be unrelated to knowledge of situational strategy choices (Lustig & King, 1980). Similarly, Schwartz and Gottman (1976) found that behaviorally incompetent individuals could not be differentiated from competent subjects on the basis of their knowledge of appropriate behavior. Research has also shown that socially anxious individuals often do not manifest actual behavioral skill deficits, only self-perceived deficits (Clark & Arkowitz, 1975; Glasgow & Arkowitz, 1975).

Given these varied findings, it is difficult to derive a consistent pattern from which to develop a cogent model of relationships among components. Still, it is possible to posit a speculative relationship among the components of motivation, knowledge, and skill. Communicative motivation results from an individual's communicative history and contextual stimuli. The perception of threat or reward in a situation therefore must entail at least knowledge of situation recognition. However, research cited above indicates that anxiety is generally unrelated to knowledge of communicative strategies and actual skills. Thus, motivation may prompt knowledge search and/or skill performance, yet, in and of itself does not guarantee the possession of or deficit in either component.

A different relationship is likely to exist between knowledge and skill. Recall that skills presume abilities focused on task performance. For example, just as the skill of driving presumes some knowledge of automotive mechanics, traffic situations, and physical dynamics, so does the skill of negotiating presume some knowledge of bargaining, the bargaining situation, and the parties involved. Also, increased experience with a person or situation is likely to contribute both to one's knowledge and skill repertoire, since both are "exercised" continuously. Knowledge and skills are likely, therefore, to be moderately to strongly correlated, within contexts (e.g., knowledge and skills in a negotiating situation). However, there is likely to be little or no relation between knowledge and skills across contexts. That is, extensive know-

ledge of negotiating is likely to be unrelated to dating skills. Thus motivation is expected to be relatively unrelated to knowledge and skill in interaction. Knowledge of given situations/persons is expected to be positively related to communicative skills within a given context, but unrelated to skills in other contexts. Given these speculative interrelationships, it appears that the components of motivation, knowledge, and skill may be interactive and correlated, but probably not substantially. If true, this model should provide good conditions for multiple regression predictions (Kerlinger & Pedhazur, 1973).

Outcomes. Now that there is a predictive model, what should be predicted? Several outcomes represent criteria of competent interaction. If individuals are competent in a given interaction, several episodic outcomes are expected, among them, perceived confirmation, communication satisfaction, and perceived conversational appropriateness and effectiveness. These three outcomes are central to be confirming rather than disconfirming, satisfying rather than dissatisfying, and appropriate and/or effective rather than inappropriate and/or ineffective.

Competent communication is likely to confirm an interactant's sense of self (Cissna, 1976; Cissna & Keating, 1979; Sieburg, 1973; Sieburg & Larson, 1971; Wilmot, 1979). Confirming interaction expresses recognition of alter, is responsive to alter's communication, is accepting of alter's self-experience, and "suggests a willingness on the part of the speaker to become involved with the other person" (Sieburg, 1973, p. 4). Confirming interaction, then, according to most standards, is competent interaction.

Competent interactions are likely to enhance self- and alter-satisfaction with the communication process. As Hecht (1978a) indicates, "Identification of satisfying communication behaviors provides a means for explicating the notion of effectiveness or competence" (p. 1). This is true because satisfaction "is derived from a process analogous to goal-attainment, one of the keys to effectiveness" (Hecht, 1978a, p. 2). Specifically, satisfaction represents the reinforcement of positive expectations (Hecht, 1978d). Hence, communication is satisfying to the extent that communicators attain positive reinforcement and fulfillment of positive expectations.

Finally, relationally competent interaction should result in molar impressions of conversational appropriateness and effectiveness. Consistently, theorists of competence in interaction have stressed the importance of appropriateness and effectiveness (Allen & Brown, 1976; Brandt, 1979; Cegala, 1978; Hersen & Bellack, 1977; Wiemann, 1977). To some extent, the impression that a conversation was appropriate and effective represent a minimal or necessary outcome of competent interaction. It

is a perception on the part of the interactants that a conversational episode was definitionally appropriate and effective.

Summary: The foregoing discussion indicates that there are three fundamental components of competence in communicating: motivation, knowledge, and skill. An individual needs to be motivated to interact competently, possess the knowledge of how to interact competently, and be capable of enacting (i.e., demonstrating) the behavioral requisites of competent interaction. The adequacy of these components can be assessed by the degree to which they relate to outcomes of competent interaction. The extent to which competent outcomes are achieved is dependent upon a relational process. That is, through the course of a conversational episode, A may perceive A to be very competent, yet, B may perceive A as incompetent. In this instance, A's self-reported self-competence is likely to be highly related to A's self-reported outcomes (assuming also that A perceives B as moderately competent). However, inasmuch as B perceives A as incompetent, A cannot be considered competent within the context of the relationship between A and B.

As can be noticed from the above discussion, there is a grammatical problem in discussing relational matters. Therefore, before specifying the hypotheses, a relational grammar must be elaborated. In this grammar, A's perception of A's own competence is A's self-competence. B's perception of A's competence is A's other-competence. Both A's and B's self-competence are assessed by a self-rated competence measure. A's relational competence consists of A's self- and other-competence combined. A's and B's other-competence are assessed by a rating of alter-competence measure. Joint relational competence is the additive combination of A's and B's relational competence, and interactive relational competence is the multiplicative combination of A's and B's relational competence. These constructs, along with the other constructs included in this analysis, are identified in Table 2.

Table 2. List of Variables and Variable Labels

COMPETENCE COMPONENTS

Skills	Label
A's Self-Rated Competence (AA)	ASC
B's Self-Rated Competence (BB)	BSC
A's Other-Competence (BA)	AOC
B's Other-Competence (AB)	BOC

A's Relational Competence (AA+BA)	APC
B's Relational Competence (BB+AB)	BRC
Joint Relational Competence (ARC+BRC)	JRC
Interactive Relational Competence (ARC+BRC)	IRC
Attentiveness	ATT

Motivation

Communication Involvement	CIN
Interpersonal Communication Apprehension	ICA

Knowledge

Self-Monitoring	SMN

COMPETENCE OUTCOMES

Perceived Confirmation	CON
Conversational Appropriateness & Effectiveness	CAE
Communication Satisfaction	SAT
Alter's Confirmation	ACON
Alter's Appropriateness & Effectiveness	ACAE
Alter's Satisfaction	ASAT

CONCLUSION

An extensive review of the conceptual and empirical literature regarding competent interaction has been evaluated. To facilitate the analysis and critique, a new typology of competence constructs was developed. This typology divides the loci of competence concepts into outcomes and communication. The loci of these conceptualizations are person, person x situation, and (person X person) X situation. These categories define six constructs: fundamental competence and efficacy, linguistic competence, social skills and social strategis competence, and relational competence (See Appendix I for listing of authors by category). Despite an enormous amount of conceptualization and research on competence, very few specific, operational, and/or predictive models of theories exist. A three component model of relational competence is therefore constructed.

The components are motivation, knowledge, and skill in communicative contexts. In addition, numerous outcome criteria are identified that are functionally related to competent communication. Assumptions and general relationships among components and outcomes are explicated. The model is integrative in the sense that most extant research and theory can be interpreted usefully within the framework of the components. Yet, the model is specific enough to provide empirically verifiable predictions. And the model is sensitive enough to describe contextually mediated impressions of competence.

The importance of the model is twofold. First, it is heuristic, in that it integrates a mass of literature and suggests several avenues of research and refinement. Second, the model provides a useful framework for assessing communication competencies in industry and education. Increasingly, our society is seeking criteria by which individuals can be assessed as competent or incompetent. Employers (Becker, 1977; Taylor & Buchanan, 1973) and educators (Mead, 1980a, 1980b; Staton-Spicer, 1980; Tortoriello & Phelps, 1975; Zimmerman, 1980) are seeking standards of competence. While this model is aligned with interpersonal communication theory, its orientation should apply to educational and industrial competency assessment as well. Obviously, the instrumentation will vary, depending on the specific components and functions being assessed. Nevertheless, the model should provide a much needed integration to a fragmented field. To the extent that this model of relational competence is verified empirically, and refined conceptually, it can serve to guide research and theory into one of the most important and central constructs in the field of communication.

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Appendix 1: Classification of Competence Literature

What follows is a taxonomic classification of conceptualizations/operationalizations found in the literature. When possible, classification was based on the authors' conceptualization of competence, specifically the role(s) of outcomes, communication, alter(s), and context. In many instances, difficulty arose when (1) there was no conceptualization of competence, in which case operational definitions provided the basis for classification, and (2) there was minimal isomorphism between the conceptualization and the operationalization of competence, in which case preference typically was given to the conceptual definition.

FUNDAMENTAL COMPETENCE

Adcock & Segal, 1979
Aumack, 1962
Bandura, 1977
Becker, 1977
Braen, 1960
Breskin, 1968
Broucek, 1979
Brown & Inouye, 1978
Cervin, 1957
Colson, 1967
Colten & Langolois, 1976
Colter & Morrow, 1978
Connolly & Bruner, 1974
Crites & Fitzberald, 1978
Franks & Morolla, 1976
Geller, et.al., 1973
Gladwin, 1967
Gotlib & Asarnow, 1980
Harter, 1978
Lanyon, 1967
Moos & Tsu, 1976
Muhar, 1974
Olczack & Goldman, 1978
Olson & Partington, 1977
Ritter, 1979
Schaie, 1955
Scott, 1966
Smith, 1968
Sundberg, 1977
Sundberg, et.al., 1978
White, 1959, 1966, 1968, 1976
Wolper, 1955
Zelen & Levitt, 1954

LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

Brenner & Hjelmquist, 1978
Bucci & Freedman, 1978
Burleson & Kline, 1979
Greene, 1977
Groot, 1975
Habermas, 1970
Jakobovitz, 1969, 1970
Kagan, 1979
Kaufer, 1979
McGuire, 1977
Misgeld, 1977
Sankoff, 1974
Tronick, et.al., 1980
Wiener, et.al., 1980

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Bannai, 1980
Black, 1979
Branham, 1981
Briere, 1979
Buckingham & Rosenfeld, 1978
Cazden, 1972
Dittmar, 1976
Greene, 1977
Grimshaw, 1971
Hosman & Tardy, 1980
Hayano, 1980
Hymes, 1972
Johnson, 1979
Krauss & Glucksberg, 1969
Krembs, 1980
Larson, 1978
Larson, et.al., 1978
Mathews, 1979
McCarthy, 1973
Mead, 1980a, 1980b
Paulston, 1974
Powell, 1979
Rivers, 1973
Rodnick & Wood, 1973
Sedano & Ribeau, 1981
Simon, 1979
Trenholm & Rose, 1981
Wiemann & Knapp, 1975
Wood, 1973
Wood, et.al., 1977

INTERPERSONAL AND STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

Argyris, 1962, 1965a, 1965b, 1968
Baxter & Philpott, 1981
Bochner & Kelly, 1974
Clark & Delia, 1979
Getter & Nowinski, 1981
Goffman, 1969
Goldfried & D'Zurilla, 1969
Kelly, et.al., 1979
Mischel, 1973
Parks, 1977
Rose, et.al., 1977
Shure, 1980
Spitzberg, 1981d
Spivack, et.al., 1976
Thayer, 1968
Warrick, 1972
Weinstein, 1966, 1969
Yardley, 1979

Appendix 1, cont.

SOCIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCE

Allen & Brown, 1976
Allen & Wood, 1978
Archer & Kagan, 1973
Argyle, 1969, 1979, 1980
Arkowitz, 1977
Arkowitz, et.al., 1975
Baldwin, 1958
Barlow, et.al., 1977
Bellack & Hersen, 1978
Bellack, et.al., 1979
Berryman-Fink & Pederson, 1981
Bienvenu, 1970, 1971
Bochner & Yerby, 1977
Bohart, et.al., 1979
Bornstein, et.al., 1977
Breen, et.al., 1977
Briedis, 1978
Bronfenbrenner, et.al., 1958
Brunner & Phelps, 1979, 1981
Buley, 1979
Burke & Clark, 1980
Clark & Arkowitz, 1975
Curran, 1979
Curran, et.al., 1980
Cushman & Craig, 1976
D'Augelli, 1973
Delia, et.al., 1979
Dow, et.al., 1980
Eisler, 1978
Elliot & Connolly, 1974
Farber, 1962
Farrell, et.al., 1979
Foote & Cottrell, 1955
Foy, et.al., 1979
Girodo, 1978
Glasgow & Arkowitz, 1975
Gompertz, 1977
Greenwald, 1977
Guerney, 1977
Halamandaris & Loughton, 1972
Hale, 1980
Hale & Delia, 1976
Hefele & Hurst, 1972
Hersen & Bellack, 1977
Holland & Baird, 1968
Hollander, 1973
Ivey & Hurst, 1971
Jandt & Armstrong, 1978
Jacob, et.al., 1978
Knapp, 1978
Koffman, et.al., 1978
Kupke, et.al., 1979
Kupke, et.al., 1979
Larson, 1967
Lavin & Kupke, 1980
Levenson & Gottman, 1978
Lowe, 1980
Lowe & Cautela, 1978
Macklin & Rossiter, 1976
McReynolds, 1968
Mettatel & Gottman, 1980
Minkin, et.al., 1976
Moment & Zaleznik, 1963
Neal & Hughey, 1979
Olsen & Partington, 1977
Patterson, et.al., 1975
Phelps & Snavely, 1979, 1980
Priestly, et.al., 1978
Rathjen, 1980
Remer, 1978
Ritter, 1979
Romano & Bellack, 1980
Rose, 1975
Reusch, 1957, 1972
Shatz, 1977
Smith & Greenberg, 1979
Spitzberg, 1980
Stanton & Litwak, 1955
Steffen & Redden, 1977
Steffen, et.al., 1979
Trower, 1979
Trower, et.al., 1978
Tyler, 1978
Weiss, et.al., 1979
Wood, et.al., 1977
Wright & Dunn, 1970
Wright, et.al., 1968
Wright, et.al., 1974

RELATIONAL COMPETENCE

Bennis, et.al., 1973
Brandt, 1979
Cegala, 1978, 1981
Cupach, 1981
Cupach & Spitzberg, 1981
Feingold, 1977
Fitts, 1970
Gambrill, 1977
Gottman, 1979
Hart & Burks, 1972
Hart, et.al., 1980
Hersen & Bellack, 1977
Lange, 1980
O'Malley, 1977
Pearce, 1976
Phillips & Metzger, 1976
Pierce & Zarle, 1972
Ruben, 1976
Spitzberg, 1981c
Spitzberg & Cupach, 1981
Wiemann, 1977